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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Celebrating Idaho's Literary Heritage at the National Book Festival in D.C.**

The Idaho Commission for Libraries will celebrate Idaho's literary heritage at the 13<sup>th</sup> annual National Book Festival. The Festival, sponsored by the Library of Congress, will be held Saturday and Sunday, September 21–22, 2013 on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Last year, over 200,000 attendees explored the Festival, which features authors, poets, illustrators, and a variety of pavilions. The U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) sponsors the Festival's "Pavilion of the States" to promote reading and the literary traditions of the 50 states, District of Columbia, and U.S. territories. At Idaho's table in the Pavilion, two Commission staff members will visit with attendees and share information about how Idaho and Idaho libraries promote reading, literacy, and books. This year they will also highlight how Idaho libraries support STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) learning efforts.

Idaho's featured book at this year's Festival is *Polly Bemis, A Chinese American Pioneer* by Priscilla Wegars, chosen because it ties in with the commemoration of Idaho's Territorial Sesquicentennial. For this children's book, also of interest to adults, the author has carefully researched the story of one of Idaho's most famous women and included beautiful illustrations and historical photographs from a variety of sources. "Even before Polly's death in 1933, various myths had become associated with her, namely, that she was 'won in a poker game' and that her Chinese name was 'Lalu.' However, my extensive research produced no historical evidence for the oft-repeated legends," said Wegars. "Instead, Polly's real life was so genuinely fascinating that it needed no fictional embellishment. A fun fact about this book is that many Idaho fourth-graders helped write it. Before publication, I took the manuscript and illustrations to numerous fourth-grade classrooms and asked the children what they liked about it, what they didn't like, and what it needed to include. Some of their suggestions were incorporated into the finished book. Others, along with games, puzzles, paper action figures, and FAQs (frequently-asked questions), are available at [pollybemis.org](http://pollybemis.org)."

State Librarian Ann Joslin said, "We are pleased to feature *Polly Bemis*, the story of an important character in Idaho's history, at the Festival and we look forward to the opportunity to share information about Idaho literacy projects and how libraries are emerging as community technology hubs for out-of-school STEM learning. Commission staff members enjoy answering questions about Idaho writers and books. It's always a pleasure to see thousands of families visit the Festival's Pavilion of the States and deepen their excitement about reading and learning."

Commission staff attendance at the Festival is made possible by a grant from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services administered by the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA). See more about the National Book Festival at [www.loc.gov/bookfest](http://www.loc.gov/bookfest).

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The Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL) assists libraries to build the capacity to better serve their clientele. To learn more about ICfL, visit <http://libraries.idaho.gov/>.